EMANCIPATION IN THE FRENCH CARIBBEAN

Slavery was first abolished by the French Revolutionary Government in 1790 but Napoleon restored it in 1803. In 1818, the French Government decided to abolish slavery but this was not put in effect til 1830. At the same time an amelioration plan was adopted but it was heavily resisted by the French planters (plantocracy).

Anti slavery movements in France began to emerge. One of these groups was 'The Society for the Abolition of slavery' which was formed by Victor Schoelcher a French humanitarian. The French West India Interest (organisation for planters) opposed the Society.

In 1838, the first emancipation bill was overturned by the French West India Interest. The Society sent a petition for immediate emancipation to the government. In 1848, all slaves in the French Caribbean (Guadeloupe, Martinique, St Croix, St Bartholomew, Tortuga, Haiti and French Guina) were freed based on Schoelcher's emancipation proposals. Slave owners were comoensated with 126 million francs. There was no apprenticeship system set up in the French colonies.

EMANCIPATION IN CUBA

Before 1791, the year of the start of the French Revolutionary wars, the Cuban economy thrived on tobacco production. Spain's involvement in these wars cut Cuba off from its tobacco markets and forced a change to sugar production using slave labour. Slaves were brought in to Cuba in large numbers from 1791 and by 1837 the number of slaves in Cuba had reached to 12,000 (Despite the treaties/ agreements that Spain had signed with Britain to cut down on the number of slaves brought into Cuba).

In 1814, Spain made an intial attempt to stop the slave trade but this was not enforced until 1865. Some of the factors that were leading towards emancipation were;

A strong abolition movement in Spain

Britain's arguments in favour of emancipation

The danger of slave revolts

The Cuban Independence movvement of American slaves as a result of the American Civil war

By 1878, Spain agreed to gradually emancipate Cuban slaves. There would be no compensation for slave owners. In 1886 Emancipation of slaves in Cuba was completed.

RELATED PAST PAPER QUESTIONS

1 a. State 2 ways in which the British and French anti slavery movements were similar.

b. Name one french territory where slaves were freed in 1848.

c. Give 2 reasons why slavery was abolished in Cuba in 1886.

d. Explain why slavery was abolished in the French Caribbean much earlier than in Cuba